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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-14 ISO-00 AID-05 CEA-01 CIAE-00 COME-00
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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1547
USDA/WASHDC
INFO ALL OECD CAPITALS
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
USMISSION GENEVA

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AGRICULTURE PASS DEP ASST SEC SCHUH, ASST SECRETARY
HATHAWAY AND MAX WITCHER, IOA/FAS

SUBJ: WP NO. 1 (AG POL) MEETING, 8-10 MAY 1978

SUMMARY. REPORT ON PERI-URBAN AGRICULTURE HAILED AS
FIRST PRODUCED BY OECD AGDIR TO CARRY EXPLICIT POLICY
RECOMMENDATIONS. UK TO CALL FOR STUDY OF AGRICULTURAL
AND CONSERVATION/ENVIRONMENT POLICIES IN NEXT COMM FOR
AGR MEETING. SYSTEM APPROACH TO STUDY OF ISSUES
FACING THE FOOD ECONOMY OF MEMBER COUNTRIES ENDORSED
IN PRINCIPLE BUT FURTHER DEFINITION OF PRIORITIES
NEEDED. US FOOD STAMP PROGRAM DISCUSSION IN WP1
OF INTEREST TO PARTICIPANTS. AGDIR AND SOME DELEGATES
WANT ANALYSIS TO WEIGH MORE HEAVILY IN FUTURE STUDIES.
END SUMMARY.
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1. OFFICERS ELECTED FOR WP1 WERE POPP (SWITZERLAND)
CHAIRMAN AND LEGER (FRANCE) AND HINTIKKA (FINALND)
VICE-CHAIRMEN.

2. REPORT ON PERI-URBAN AGRICULTURE WAS DISCUSSED
AND AMENDED FOR TRANSMISSION TO THE COMM FOR AG HOPE-

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FULLY NEXT WEEK WITH RECOMMENDATION FOR DERESTRICTION AND PUBLICATION. DISCUSSION LED BY US DEL SCHUH CHANGED TONE OF TEXT IN SEVERAL PLACES AWAY FROM STRONG AGRICULTURAL FUNDAMENTALIST PERSPECTIVE TO A MORE BALANCED VIEW. UNIQUE ASPECT OF THIS REPORT IS THAT IT IS THE FIRST OF ITS KIND IN OECD AGRICULTURAL HISTORY TO CARRY SPECIFIC POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS, AGRICULTURAL DIRECTORATE HOPING TO ESTABLISH THE PRINCIPLE FOR FUTURE REPORTS. RECOMMENDATIONS WILL ALSO BE FLOATED TO THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE FOR COMMENT SINCE THEY MAY HAVE IMPLICATIONS FOR WORK IN THAT COMMITTEE PROPOSED BY SEC VANCE ON URBAN DECAY AND MEASURES FOR URBAN VIABILITY.

3. UK WILL TABLE PROPOSAL TO COMM FOR AGR NEXT WEEK FOR OECD TO STUDY AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS ON TOPIC OF AGRICULTURE AND CONSERVATION POLICIES, I.E. HOW TO ACHIEVE PROGRESSIVE, PRODUCTIVE, EFFICIENT AGRICULTURE WITHIN THE GROWING ENVIRONMENTAL/CONSERVATION CONSTRAINTS.

4. THE OUTLINE OF A STUDY PROPOSAL ON ISSUES FACING THE FOOD ECONOMIES OF OECD MEMBER COUNTRIES WAS DIFFICULT FOR WP 1 TO DISCUSS AND PROVIDE DIRECTION ON TO THE AG DIRECTORATE. THE OUTLINE TOOK A UNCLASSIFIED

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SYSTEMS PERSPECTIVE AND IN ITS PRESENT FORM LACKS FOCUS AND A SENSE OF PURPOSE AND PRIORITY. WHILE DELEGATES APPLAUDED THE BROAD SYSTEM PERSPECTIVE THEY SUGGESTED A BEGINNING FOCUS ON A SUB SET OF ISSUES, LIKELY ON CONSUMER FOOD AND NUTRITION POLICIES. BELGIUM SUPPORTED BY FRANCE AND UK SUGGESTED REFERRING THE OUTLINE FOR DISCUSSION IN THE COMM FOR AGR NEXT WEEK. AG DIRECTORATE WILL PREPARE SHORT NOTE SUMMARIZING WP1 DISCUSSION FOR DELIVERY ALONG WITH ORAL REPORT TO COMM FOR AGR UNDER OTHER BUSINESS NEXT WEEK. AGDIR WILL ALSO PREPARE MORE DETAILED OUTLINE FOR DISCUSSION AT JUNE WP1 MEETING. GERMANY PROPOSED A SERIES OF COUNTRY NOTES ON FOOD POLICIES FROM MEMBER COUNTRIES THEMSELVES AS BACKGROUND FOR THE AG DIR. THIS PROPOSAL WILL ALSO LIKELY BE DISCUSSED AT COMM FOR AGR.

5. REPORT ON CONSUMER FOOD POLICIES: SELECTED COUNTRY EXAMPLES WERE DISCUSSED. COUNTRY EXAMPLES INCLUDED PRICE SUBSIDY POLICIES IN UK, SWEDEN, AND NORWAY AND AN INCOME GRANT POLICY IN THE U.S., THE FOOD STAMP PROGRAM. STRONG INTEREST WAS SHOWN IN

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THE FOOD STAMP PROGRAM - ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS,

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ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROL PROCEDURES, EFFECTIVENESS IN IMPROVING NUTRITION AND EXPANDING AGRICULTURAL DEMAND, WHETHER BUDGET COST AND NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS MIGHT GET OUT OF HAND. DEL SCHUH POINTED OUT THAT THE FSP AS AN INCOME GRANT HAS ASPECTS SIMILAR TO A NEGATIVE INCOME TAX AS AN INCOME TRANSFER MEASURE AND THAT ITS MARKET DISTORTION EFFECTS ARE MINIMAL COMPARED TO SUCH EFFECTS FROM THE CONSUMER PRICE SUBSIDY POLICIES OF THE OTHER COUNTRY EXAMPLES. REPORT TO BE REVISED AND SENT TO COMM FOR AGR FOR DERESTRICTION BUT NOT FOR PUBLICATION.

6. IN CONNECTION WITH CONSUMER FOOD POLICIES, CANADA BRIEFLY EXPLAINED THEIR EXPERIENCE IN ATTEMPTING TO INCREASE DEMAND FOR MILK POWDER BY CONSUMER PRICE SUBSIDY. EXTREMELY INELASTIC CONSUMER RESPONSE WAS NOTED FROM THIS EXPERIMENT. MORE DETAIL WILL BE SUBMITTED BY CANADA FOR INCLUSION IN A FUTURE STUDY.
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7. OBSERVATIONS. A. UK COMMENTED IN PASSING THAT THE GREEN POUND CONTROVERSY IN THE UK IS SEEN AS A CONFLICT BETWEEN FOOD CONSUMER AND AGRICULTURAL PRODUCER INTERESTS. B. THE EC DEL AT WP1 MAINTAINED AN EXTREMELY LOW PROFILE WITH ONLY SIGNIFICANT REMARK MADE DURING DISCUSSION OF STUDY PROPOSAL ON ISSUES FACING FOOD ECONOMIES WHICH WAS TO SUGGEST CAUTION ABOUT EMBARKING ON POLITICAL-ANALYTICAL STUDIES. OTHER COUNTRIES SHOWED INTEREST IN MOVING TOWARD MORE ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATION RATHER THAN THE PAST PURELY DESCRIPTIVE STUDY MADE. AG DIR WAS ALSO PUSHING IN THIS DIRECTION. C. SEVERAL COUNTRIES, NOTABLY UK, AUSTRALIA, CANADA, GERMANY, DENMARK MADE COMMENTS FAVORING EFFICIENCY AS AN IMPORTANT CONCEPT IN POLICY STUDIES. D. AG DIR IS INCREASING THEIR INTEREST IN FOLLOWING DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH-SOUTH ISSUES. THE ANNUAL AGRICULTURAL POLICY REVIEW WILL CONTINUE AS A PERMANENT FEATURE A SECTION ON TRENDS IN NON-OECD AREAS, BOTH LDC'S AND EASTERN BLOC COUNTRIES.

7. NEXT WP1 MEETING, 26-28 JUNE 1978.

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